Middle Leaders in College Redesign

Leading from the Middle 2019

Rose Asera, PhD

September 2020

www.rpgroup.org

Table of Contents

Introduction

California Community Colleges are engaged in a range of institutional redesign efforts, including implementing Guided Pathways and reconstructing the entry to transfer-level mathematics and English courses. The intention of these redesigns is to make students' educational experiences more coherent, effective, and equitable. These transformational efforts involve changes in campus policies, procedures, and practices, and they require leadership, not only from the executive level but also from middle leaders.

Overview of Leading from the Middle

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) launched Leading from the Middle (LFM) in 2013 to develop and support middle leaders in community colleges across California. Development of middle leaders became increasingly important over the last decade when statewide initiatives, such as the Basic Skills Initiative, created opportunities for faculty and staff members to take on positions as coordinators and directors of programs designed to improve the student experience. The opportunities for middle leaders to contribute to college redesign efforts increased even more as community colleges implement Guided Pathways and reconstruct entry-level mathematics and English courses aligned with Assembly Bill (AB) 705.

This report presents the experiences of the LFM 2019 statewide academies participants in applying their leadership skills to aspects of Guided Pathways. Each year LFM produces an internal evaluation report that presents participants' perspectives about what they learned from their experience and how they have applied it. Taken together, these reports provide an emerging picture of the role of middle leaders in leading change, the challenges they face, and their successes, both large and small. Moreover, the LFM steering committee uses feedback from participants for ongoing program development.

LFM Program Design

LFM is a one-year hands-on professional learning program that gives community college educators the opportunity to develop and deepen their leadership skills. The LFM academy design reflects the literature on effective professional development. LFM is experiential, directly related to practice, and undertaken collaboratively with colleagues. The outcomes (see sidebar) describe the development over time that participants may experience

LFM Outcomes

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

- Develop leadership identity.
- Develop strategies to sustain and support leadership development.

TEAM COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP:

- Create and sustain professional relationships in which peers share ideas and strategize together.

LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF A COLLEGE INITIATIVE:

- Engage with existing literature.
- Apply research and evidence to make informed decisions that advance institutional change efforts.
- Strengthen capacity to prioritize and lead departmental, institutional, and other changes through the process of evidence-based inquiry.

in individual growth (identity as a leader), in relationships and collaboration (teams and collective leadership), and in contributions to strengthening the institution (leading a college initiative).

Each academy has two interconnected components: three face-to-face convenings that take place over the course of a calendar year (February, June, and October) and coaching by a former LFM participant that is provided during and between convenings.

LFM's curricular content spans leadership and the change process. Every year, new topics, readings, and activities are added to reflect current conditions. Beyond the core topics of understanding the change process, planning, communicating, building coalitions, and taking risks, LFM 2019 focused on developing colleges' capacity to use data and evidence. The data modules gave teams the opportunity to examine their own local data and to practice potentially difficult conversations about data.

LFM Convenings

At the two-and-a-half day convenings, participants meet in small and large groups. Cross-functional college teams have time together and the opportunity to apply leadership skills to their chosen campus projects. Each college team came to LFM 2019 with a specific focus within the broad Guided Pathways design. These projects included program mapping, onboarding, data dashboards, data coaching, and organization of professional development activities, such as flex days. Participants also get to hear about and collect ideas from other colleges.

LFM Coaches

Every team has a designated coach, a middle leader who has previously been an LFM participant. Coaches provide support during and between convenings; they stay in touch with college teams through calls, email, and campus visits.

This embedded coaching role is designed not only to strengthen the experience for participants, but also to provide coaches with ongoing leadership development. Coaches have a chance to observe issues at another college and see how LFM strategies and skills can be applied in another setting. Supported by the LFM Director of Coaching, coaches meet together as a community of practice. In this way, the experience of coaches has become "LFM2.0" and lets the coaches deepen their own middle leadership skills.

The growth of LFM and the increase in the number of coaches have been mutually supportive. In 2013, LFM began with one academy and five coaches serving 12 colleges. In 2016, LFM increased to 12 coaches, so that each college had a designated coach. In 2018, with increased funding, LFM doubled in size to offer two academies, with 26 colleges and 26 coaches. At the end of each year, some participants are invited to become coaches, so there is a growing pool of coaches.

Leading from the Middle 2019

Along with the core leadership skills and the change process, LFM 2019 focused on colleges' capacity to address the complexities of Guided Pathways, with an emphasis on using data and evidence.

LFM 2019 served 26 college teams through two statewide academies, engaging a total of 130 community college educators (see the Appendix for a list of participating colleges). Among the participating colleges, 11 had attended LFM 2018 and returned to continue their work.

In addition to the statewide academies, LFM organized an academy for 18 Regional Coordinators (RCs). This new position was created by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office to support colleges as it implements Guided Pathways. The academy created a space for colleagues to build community, identify issues in their regions, shape their new roles, and become familiar with LFM leadership content. The RC Academy was transitional for nine months, as participants established their relationships with colleges.

In This Report

This year's report focuses on the roles middle leaders play in Guided Pathways. The report begins with LFM's purpose and design. The body of the report is organized by the three overarching outcomes of Leading from the Middle, moving from the broadest institutional level to the individual outcomes:

- *Leading a college change initiative* is the action at the heart of LFM. This section describes the ways that middle leaders have applied leadership strategies and tools at their colleges. It further discusses what they have learned about using data in the redesign process. The section ends with examples of progress on Guided Pathways.

- *Relationship-building and collaboration* are inherently part of middle leadership. This section describes development of relationships within the cross-functional team and ways that the team members have come to function collaboratively. It further describes the relationship participants have with their coaches.

- *Leadership development* grows out of hands-on experience and reflection. This section describes individuals' sense of their own growth as leaders. With the hands-on experiences of using tools and applying skills as part of a collaborative team, novice leaders gain the confidence to see themselves as leaders. Seasoned leaders have a chance to deepen their leadership skills.

The report concludes with a brief look to next steps for LFM.

The sources for this report include daily reflection cards that were completed at every convening in 2019 as well as and surveys that were administered at the second and third convenings. Participant quotes—drawn from survey responses from both statewide

academies—are the major component of the narrative, so that participants' own words describe aspects of middle leadership in college redesign.

LFM 2019: Middle Leaders in College Redesign

Guided Pathways provides a flexible framework that focuses on creating coherent educational experiences for students. The approach means that each college shapes its redesign effort to fit its campus, culture, and community. The LFM Academy gave participants the opportunity to apply leadership skills and strategies to implement a particular aspect of Guided Pathways.

The body of the report describes participants' perspectives on the ways that they were able to advance their college's redesign efforts. The three overarching LFM outcomes—from the broadest institutional view to the collaborative team to the individual growth—provide a lens for examining this progress.

Leading a College Change Initiative

In the LFM curriculum, the campus redesign project provides the context for participants to apply their growing leadership skills. Through discussions and graphic tools, teams map out their local culture, develop a communication and engagement plan, and strategically prepare for implementation. Hearing the experiences of other colleges at the LFM academy helps teams understand the local strengths and needs of their own college

College Projects and Progress in Guided Pathways

SELECTING AN AREA OF FOCUS

Participating colleges chose different aspects of Guided Pathways as the focus of their work in LFM. Some college teams came into the academies with a focus area already determined. Others needed time to identify a specific project for their LFM work.

One team, initially used the time in LFM's supportive setting to define and shape their focus:

> *Our project took time to develop.* **We had to narrow down our scope as Guided Pathways has so many parts. It is like an octopus.** *We decided to look at our Strategic Goals, Integrated Plan and our Equity goals and then take the pillars and look at work we have done to date and capture that to show that we are doing Guided Pathways and that is an overarching framework. Then from … there we were able to decide what we need to focus on and then created a timeline on how we will carry out the next leg of the work.*

Other teams came to LFM with an agreed-upon focus. Through activities and conversations, often with support from their coaches, these teams used the available resources to determine how to proceed. Two participants noted:

*Our team had the task of **developing the problem statement for our Pathways work** as well as an outline for our CANVAS shell whose purpose is to be a resource hub for Pathways. LFM is the only group working on these projects so it is [an] integral part and we are already on agendas to present what we came up with. The literature that was provided to us and the data warehouses will be part of our CANVAS shell.*

*Our project has been to lay **a roadmap for Guided Pathways** at our campus, and find opportunities to promote its institutionalization and sustainability. As part of this, we actually redesigned the entire structure of our Guided Pathways work in order to integrate it more into existing campus bodies. I think we might have come to this conclusion eventually, but it would have been much delayed without the opportunity to participate in LFM.*

EXAMPLES OF LFM PROJECT

Several colleges focused on the Guided Pathways tasks of developing program maps and meta-majors. As other teams have noted over the years, LFM's retreat setting allows time to concentrate. Such protected, focused time is rarely available on campus. Four participants described the ways that LFM teams connected their work to the broader Guided Pathways effort:

*Our biggest project this year is getting **program maps** created for all our programs and/or certificates. Two of the members of the LFM team are Guided Pathways coordinators and one member is a Guided Pathways liaison, who will be working with discipline faculty, particularly disciplines that are staffed only by part-time faculty. The LFM team has been able to bring back activities and tools that are being used to the facilitate this project.*

*LFM gave us time to work together on implementing our **meta-majors, degree placement within the meta-majors, and the term-by-term roadmaps.** We should have this work finished (to District IT to implement in Smart Schedule) by end of next month! It's helpful to have a time set aside to get to know each other, bond, and plan our work.*

*Our project is to create the **review process for our program mapping**. The LFM team came up with objectives and activities for this and spent some time thinking and planning next actions that we might not otherwise have thought if we had not worked as a team.*

*Our goal was to make the case for GP, and to get started on **program mapping**. We held two **student journey workshops** in the spring where we gathered lots of qualitative data about what is working and what needs improvement. We also held two student panels where we gathered student input. Success: Flex Day with faculty was very well-attended and well-received. Struggle: Getting faculty to meaningfully engage in program mapping.*

Several other college teams focused on projects that addressed entry to college and orientation as well as, in one case, creating a path for undeclared students. These examples illustrate ways of organizing onboarding:

> Our team is working on the **onboarding experience**. Currently, the college offers different orientations through different departments; however, we discussed developing one onboarding experience for all students which would include the participation of the entire college, from the President's Office to classified staff.

> Our project (Seven Seas) was a set of classes that a first year, **undeclared major** could take that would 1) satisfy local GE requirements, 2) transfer to both CSUs and UCs, and 3) keep them on track to complete a degree. The idea was generated entirely at LFM meetings. Our team advocated for the Seven Seas with administration and with PC committees. We are also brainstorming marketing ideas.

USING TOOLS

Graphic tools give teams the chance to visually represent the dynamic forces in their college contexts. Certain tools, such as the stakeholder map, let the team identify important players at its college. Other tools, such as the momentum map, give the team the chance to look back over work to date and project into the future. The logic model, as a planning tool, names inputs and short- and long-term goals; the logic model can be revisited to reflect internal or external changes over time

The examples below highlight the ways that college teams applied LFM tools in institutional redesign. These tools can be used to scaffold conversations, first among the team to construct a collective perspective. Later, a filled-in tool can be used to open conversations with colleagues on campus. Two participants described their experiences of this practical application:

> I think the tools were super helpful in **getting an honest and productive conversation going**. We were able to use the tools to identify real problems and possible pitfalls, as well as to formulate solutions and plans that can keep the process moving forward.

> I think the most useful conversations at LFM for us were related to strategizing about **how to create concrete steps and move our project forward, considering the reality at our college** (challenging relationship with Institutional Research, leadership instability, etc.). The opportunities to map the campus ecosystem, our momentum, etc. and have real conversations about both the challenges and the potential helped us make progress.

Different tools are useful at different times in the change process. Participant responses reflected the ways the tools and strategies have been applied in their redesign work. One participant listed the approaches the team had used over the year:

> We have **used a variety of LFM tools** for in several ways. Here's a few examples:

1. The Resister characteristics, benefits of resistance—we modified materials for our retreat and had a very successful presentation

2. Equity information—incorporated our campus data and create materials around equity and Guided Pathways.

3. Modified the Team Updates worksheet from the 2nd convening. Participants looked at the GP report, student surveys, and other documents, to identify what has been done, what needs to be done, goals for 19/20, and goals for 20/21 and later by the four pillars.

Data in College Redesign

The data sessions covered a range of tools available to analyze and share relevant data. Participants examined their own college data as well as composite state data. Data became a strong resource when teams made their cases for change. At the end of the year, when asked to reflect on their struggles and successes using data, three participants offered specific examples:

*We were able to **articulate the information needed** to assess high school outreach concerns and inform change in process. We have been able to identify areas that can now be worked on as a GP committee.*

*A success in using LFM data tools is to be able **to establish the "why" in pathways conversations**. Presenting data on how long it takes students to complete degrees and how many units they are accruing is helpful in looking at the student experience and investigating why these trends are occurring. It's also important to disaggregate data and identify equity gaps. It helps us think about how we can better help our students.*

*At first, we had difficulty trying to find data to support our claims. We worked together to figure out what data best supported these claims and finally found them. It was a long process. What was exciting for us was that we all **learned how to better utilize our campus data dashboards and as a result we have been able to share this knowledge with our campus and teach others how to use these tools**. Great stuff!*

UTILIZING DATA TO ENGAGE COLLEAGUES

Participants also described that data was useful to convince and engage colleagues:

*The approaches to data learned through our LFM experience [have] been extremely helpful. We have been able to integrate data in our pitch discussions and preliminary marketing. **Through our use of data, we were able to gain more buy-in from key stakeholders** at our institution.*

Successes: we were able to use the data tools to easily convince the vice president and president to promote and fund our program. Struggles: none.

Participants anticipated that colleagues might be cynical about data, perhaps doubting that statewide numbers accurately reflected their particular student population. One LFM participant noted that the data conversations at LFM helped increase the college's receptivity to internal and external data:

> Our local data are not always as ideal as they could be, and our research office does not have the capacity to execute every inquiry that the Guided Pathways team has. However, at the beginning of this project, campus constituents tended to bristle when we pointed to outside/statewide data resources that could be used as evidence on our campus. I find that now, because some key players were in the room at LFM, there's a lot more [receptivity] to the idea that we don't have to localize every single research study. We're making a lot of progress in terms of **accepting that not all data are perfect, and that we can work with what we have**.

DATA COACHING AND DATA LITERACY

College teams that came to LFM with the goal of creating a data coaching program or a campus-wide data literacy initiative found the data content relevant and applicable. Participants described their progress:

> Our goal has been to develop a data coaching program, and at the second convening we focused this to a program that supports Guided Pathways efforts and design of our college's first year experience program. LFM has given us an amazing set of resources, both practical tools and models for how to make this program function, but also the **political/leadership tools to diffuse conflict and engage resistance that arises through our efforts**.

> Our LFM team was tasked (by our VPSS and other administration) with creating a data coaching training program. At the end of last semester, our team was invited to join our Guided Pathways team of about 40 people. From the start, it was planned to have **a data coach as a part of the student success teams that correspond with each pathway**. We have been deciding on the roles and expectations of a data coach and how they would assist on the student success teams.

> We're trying to **facilitate a culture and organizational shift at our campus with regard to being more data-informed**. To that end, our project will implement a data dashboard for all segments of the community to have conversations in the same language; to implement some kind of data coach corps; and to conduct ongoing professional development activities for the campus to bring overall data-awareness and best practices into the culture. This ties into GP because it can underpin the discussions which may happen at Success Teams within our meta-majors and "affinity groups", as well as our more traditional organizational structures like departments and committees.

*This year's project is related to **democratizing data** and building a dashboard that will hopefully help to move data from interesting to actionable.*

DATA IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In a move to make the college culture more responsive today, some teams organized professional development activities. Two participants offered examples of engaging colleagues in hands-on data activities.

*Our project for the year was to figure out how to **help employees at our campus learn data literacy**, and the project we tackled in service of this goal was to develop a f-2-f data coaching training course. Our LFM team is in charge of developing the content, promoting, facilitating, and collecting feedback about the workshops, and making adjustments as we begin to build the capacity of our colleagues for finding, interpreting, and using the data to inform decisions that impact student success.*

*We developed data advocacy/data literacy professional development modules for faculty and for classified[staff] and administrators. **This is a foundational activity for the implementation of GP**. Many of the participants in the training are engaged in GP work.*

A RANGE OF COMFORT LEVELS WITH DATA

Among individual participants, the level of familiarity and comfort with data ranged from those for whom data was new (and intimidating) to institutional researchers who work with data daily. Some participants who worked on becoming familiar with data offered insights on their own learning process:

*In general, I am not very data literate. I'm not exactly sure how I was the counselor selected for this academy, but it is forcing me (in a good way) to get comfortable with data and learn how to access, analyze, and share it in a way that will help made decisions in the future. That is a personal success! **LFM has provided a lot of great tools that will assist me, and other non-data-savvy people like me, to be able to use data in a meaningful way.** Some of the activities and points that were made will be utilized in our data coaching training program.*

Some of the tools like DataMart are overwhelming, so going back and doing that stuff on my own is very rare. I enjoyed the strategies and being with team members who have also learned about how these tools will be useful for us and putting data at the center of the conversation. Having the triangulation of qual, quant, and lit was really useful too.

The data tools were great, but it was very complex. After being shown a tool, when given assignments, it would have been helpful to have more quiet time to work on the activities given. Often times the presenters kept talking on the [microphone] or cut us off short and that was very disjointed and uncomfortable. Leaving us to not finish many

aspects of the activities that were given to us. We need more time in general every time an activity is assigned. When we returned to campus, it was difficult to remember how to use the data tools, or to get buy-in around them.

Relationship-Building and Collective Leadership

Middle leaders work in a network of relationships. These relationships are sources of support, communication, and information. Moreover, they keep a human face on leadership. While many relationships might be rooted in commonality and a shared perspective, others may be valuable because they provide insight into different perspectives and opinions.

LFM explores and supports a range of relationship-building, most intensively within teams and between teams and their LFM coaches. Participants also engage with a broader network of colleagues from colleges across the state. The descriptions below dive deeply into team development and the relationship with coaches.

Team Development

Participants come to LFM as part of a cross-functional team, with colleagues from different parts of the college. LFM 2019 teams were also part of their colleges' Guided Pathways leadership or design teams. Working effectively together, they could contribute tools and resources to the larger campus effort.

Effective **team development** rests on drawing on the different strengths that individuals bring. Four participants summed up what their teams learned by engaging different perspectives:

> *We have learned **that four minds are better than one**. This is my first time with the team, so for me it was all about observing and learning from others.*
>
> ***We can work together to come up with a solution**, no matter the position held on campus.*
>
> *We have learned that **we ALL have a role in this process,** and that it is not up to one person to be in charge of everything. Our LFM team is amazing! We all have different strengths that come out in our work together.*
>
> *I think our team has realized that **we all have different mindsets, strengths, learning styles and leadership capacities.** I think a really good lesson to begin with is a conversation about this, just as we are expected to think about while teaching our students.*

One participant described the collaborative nature of middle leadership in terms of mutual support and sharing the struggles:

We have learned that if one person doesn't have the strength to go on, or the direction to carry the torch, that someone else can pick up and carry on until they no longer can see the path or carry the torch. **We have learned that there is no room for judgement and no room for recriminations, there is only room for support**.

Participants were also able to acknowledge productive challenges or shortcomings in the process of team development. Three participants used the strength of their collaborations to identify next steps:

Our team was actually quite collaborative and I was very proud that we all had such different opinions and still managed to work together. We definitely **need to get out of the analyze stage and into the let's move stage***!*

Our team was well-served by having open and frank discussions about what data can mean to different people, and we all wanted to approach data literacy with a focus on equity and social justice. Where I think we could **further develop is in the area of thinking about how our project is sustainable/manageable over time***, and defining and assigning roles and duties/tasks, both for the short-term project as well as long-term service operations.*

We learned that **collaborative leadership can be messy***, but it results in increased buy-in, enthusiasm, and effort. Our greatest strength as a team was our stick-to-it-iveness and enthusiasm, even lacking proper direction and encountering vocal resistance to our ideas. We can definitely work on transitional communication between our group and PC's next LFM team.*

Relationships with LFM Coaches

The LFM coach provides ongoing support to the team and to the development of its project. The coaches are not content experts on Guided Pathways; rather, they are prepared to listen, ask questions, and share their own experiences when relevant.

Team members appreciated the ways that their coaches were able to ease sticky points and prompt teams to think harder. Three participants describe the ways they found the interactions with their coaches useful:

Our coach is amazing— **she helps us think big-picture and stay focused***. Her experience with the literature, tools, and GP at her own campus have greatly informed and contributed to our work, including the love for play and community building.*

[Our coach] was always able to **ask a question to make us think more deeply***.*

Watching our LFM coaches lead us to thoughtful discussion without imposing their viewpoint, showed me skills that I need and want to develop. **Listening, hearing the**

underlying concerns, fears, and slowing down to really understand concerns without jumping in with my ideas of solutions.

Coaches, in turn, found that these relationships gave them the opportunity to continue to develop as leaders. One coach from the 2019 Academy described her own growth over the year:

[At first] I was very nervous, as this is the first year I am coaching a community college. I went through the LFM Academy last year as a participant so I was aware what we would be going over with each team but I was very nervous. As I have spent more time with my team and had additional webinars with the rest of the LFM coaches and coordinators, I feel more secure in using my own personal style to coach my team.

Developing and Deepening Identity as a Leader

From the beginning of LFM, program organizers understood that developing identity as a leader was a central outcome for academy participants. Over time, observations and evaluations have shown that participants' sense of leadership grows out of action and experience. As middle leaders gain knowledge and apply skills and strategies, their sense of identity and confidence grows.

Reluctant Leaders

This development of leadership identity has been particularly salient for participants who enter LFM hesitant or reluctant to see themselves as leaders. With support and experience, many of these novice or emerging leaders surprise themselves by stepping up to the challenges and satisfactions of leadership.

Over the years of LFM, some participants have described their presence as being "voluntold," in other words, being directed to "volunteer" for LFM by their colleges. They came without a clear understanding of their roles or their own leadership capacities. One participant summed up the surprise, appreciation, and evolution in response to the LFM experience:

I began as "voluntold" and then I was sold. This experience has helped me to share leadership especially as we had such a wonderfully diverse team and met even more wonderfully diverse colleagues.

Another reluctant leader relayed how they appreciated that the campus leaders saw their leadership potential and gave them the opportunity to develop it:

I've never really thought of myself as a leader. I am good at my job, and I suppose I lead by example, but I have always thought of leaders on our campus as [administrators] or those in specific roles. Receiving the direction from my campus president to be an LFM participant was surprising and a little scary. It did make me realize that the president and those who recommended me did see me as a leader or having leadership

potential*. LFM has made me realize that I need to step up and be more than just status quo.*

Challenges of Leadership

At the end of the year-long academy, participants reflected on the complexity of the change process and reported that they felt better prepared to meet the challenges of leadership:

> ***I have learned to expect the hard moments and moments of resistance****. I am still learning to cope with them and find the optimism that we can move past them. I think the tools we used to see the bigger picture are helping with this, and also knowing that I can turn to my LFM team when experiencing challenging leadership moments.*

> ***Leadership is hard, but rewarding****. It is a process, a journey, and one should not assume that because he/she has been placed in a position of leadership that translates into being a leader. Leaders inspire, they take risks, they encourage and allow for failure (they actually encourage it at times). I have learned that I have what it takes but I also realize that I have to find the truth in criticism (because generally there is some level in it) and not listen to negativity. Stay focused on the WHY and do not let myself be swayed from it. Own my truth but also be wise enough to listens to others. I don't have all the answers.*

> *Leadership is hard! Part of leadership is leading and facilitating difficult conversations and engaging with resistance.* ***I didn't realize the degree to which leadership is about communication and empowerment and not necessarily directing or managing****. I may lack a title or official authority, but I still have a sphere of influence and leadership radiates from that.*

Learning about Leadership

Others succinctly conveyed what they had learned about themselves as leaders in terms that could be printed as a banner:

> ***I'm a stronger leader than I first thought****. I was able to inform processes, give insight, and make recommendations.*

> ***It helped me be a change agent on my campus*** *by understanding that there are a ton of tools and resources at my disposal.*

> ***[LFM] gave me more confidence as a leader.*** *Made me more comfortable with data. Lots of good self-reflection.*

> *I learned that* ***I am someone people can depend on as a leader****, which was a great insight.*

*I have learned that different people define leadership differently and not all leadership is leadership. I have learned that **to be an effective leader I need to make sure that [I] use my voice [in] an authentic intentional way.***

*[I learned] that there are tools I can use now in my position to help move work forward. **That it is completely possible for me to be a leader while being a classified staff [member].***

*I have learned that **anyone, regardless of title/position at the college, can be leader in his/her own way and offer vital contribution to the college**. It is important to be at the table when decisions are being made because one's input/experience can make a difference.*

Because of the team format of LFM, some educators come to LFM more than once as part of a continuing team or an overlapping team with new colleagues. Two leaders described their own ongoing development over two years:

*This is my second LFM and my confidence that I can lead a project has grown over the past two years. **I've learned to be a better listener**, to look for the why when someone has questions (not just the answer that makes sense to me but what do they really need), how important it is to bring people along with you so that they are part of the whole process... Well the list could go on.*

*I have learned a lot about leadership over the past year and even the past two years. As a member of LFM over the past two years I have learned my place in our institution and how I can effect change. I learned **that leaders don't necessarily take control, but help guide and facilitate conversations to reach a goal**.*

The many aspects of Guided Pathways—planning, communication, engaging colleagues, using relevant data, working collaboratively in teams, and adapting the Guided Pathways framework to the local colleges culture—provides abundant opportunities for participants to apply the leadership skills they learn. In response to a question about what they had learned about leadership, one participant comprehensively summed up skills across the LFM curriculum in their own words:

1. *To listen, to allow others to speak before offering opinions or judgements;*

2. *The importance of good data stewardship (garbage in, garbage out);*

3. *The need to be passionate about student success and social justice;*

4. *The relevance of broad inclusion in decision-making;*

5. *Cultural and structural change is difficult;*

6. *How to address pushback as we attempt reforms or revamp the system;*

7. *To subsume my ego to collective decisions and to try to understand why their may be opposition to change that has the potential to positively impact student; success;*

8. *To not desist at the first sight of resistant; to build coalitions among the likeminded; to continually preach the need for change that can addresses student success*

9. *The need to be transparent, honest, ethical, and if need be, blunt;*

10. *To create an esprit de corps among those seeking change*

11. *That humor plays an important role in building trust*

12. *Of course, as a leader, to build trust that our word is our bond. Where there is low trust, there is little chance of meaningful success.*

Conclusion

This internal report is based on survey responses from participants in the two LFM 2019 statewide academies. This overview gives insights into the development of middle leaders and the roles of middle leaders in college redesign. The voices of the middle leaders reflect their experiences in LFM and how they have applied LFM skills and strategies to their college redesign efforts.

Guided Pathways and other college redesign efforts require leadership at all levels of the college, including both executive and middle leadership. The responses from participants illustrate multiple ways that middle leaders are able to advance the redesign process. Most of the LFM teams were part of their college-wide design teams and were able to directly translate planning tools and strategies to their college efforts.

The participants' responses also underscore the importance of middle leaders as change agents in the current system-wide redesign efforts. It is becoming evident that not only do middle leaders play essential roles in changing their institutions, they will also be vital in sustaining the spirit of the change, keeping the focus on the student experience, and maintaining a sense of inquiry and evidence to continue improvement and innovation.

Future Directions for LFM

At the conclusion of the 2019 academies, LFM had ambitious plans for 2020: two statewide academies that would focus on the student experience and draw on findings from the RP Group study, *Student Support Re(defined)*, and a third statewide academy that would expand the focus on data tools, analysis, and application. In collaboration with the North/Far North Regional Coordinators, LFM planned a fourth academy for small rural colleges in the Far North that have rarely been able to participate in statewide LFM academies. This academy was planned to be a hybrid with the central content delivered online and an LFM coach at each site.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, two of the statewide academies had begun. However, like all system instruction and services, professional development had to be moved

online. This situation presents a new challenge for LFM and for middle leaders to apply leadership strategies in a transitional and rapidly changing environment.

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

The RP Group strengthens the ability of California community colleges to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

www.rpgroup.org

Appendix: Participating Colleges

Statewide Academy 1

Shasta College
Saddleback College
Mount San Antonio College
Monterey Peninsula College
Pasadena City College
San Diego Mesa College
LA City College
El Camino College
College of the Canyons
Contra Costa college
Mission College
College of San Mateo
City College of San Francisco

Statewide Academy 2

Bakersfield College
Fresno City College
Grossmont College
Las Positas College
Modesto Junior College
Ohlone college
Porterville College
Reedley College
San Diego City College
San Diego Continuing Ed
Southwestern College
West Hills College Coalinga
West Hills College Lemoore